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Spring 1-15-2012

ENG 4903-001: Young Adult Literature

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Recommended Citation

Kory, Fern, "ENG 4903-001: Young Adult Literature" (2012). *Spring 2012*. 110.
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English 4903 (001) Spring 2012

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English 4903: Young Adult Literature

MWF 10:00 – 10:50 Coleman Hall 3290

Textbook

Young Adult Literature: From Romance to Realism (2010), Michael Cart

Trade Books

- 1994 *Am I Blue?* (short stories), ed. Marion Bauer
- 1999 *Monster* (novel), Walter Dean Myers (C. Myers)
- 2001 *A Step from Heaven* (novel), An Na
- 2005 AU (06 UK, 07 US) *Does My Head Look Big in This?* (novel), Randa Abdel-Fattah
- 2006 *Daisy Cutter: The Last Train* (graphic novel), Kazu Kibuishi
- 2006 *American Born Chinese* (graphic novel), Gene Yang
- 2007 *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (novel), Sherman Alexie (Forney)
- 2008 *How They Met* (short stories), David Levithan
- 2008 *Hunger Games* (novel), Suzanne Collins
- + 2002 *Hole in my Life* (memoir), Jack Gantos [not assigned]
- 2005 *The Sledding Hill* (novel), Chris Crutcher [not assigned]
- 2009 *Marcelo in the Real World* (novel), Francisco X. Stork [not assigned]

Self-Selected Works

- Contemporary YA
- International YA (Anglophone or Translated) or YA Oldie (pre-1985)
- YA Non-Fiction, Short Fiction, Historical Fiction, Poetry, Fantasy, Sci Fi

ASSIGNMENTS AND OBJECTIVES

This semester, we will explore the range of literary works written or marketed as “Young Adult” (YA), for a readership traditionally defined as 12–18 year olds. Assigned and self-selected readings will include literature in a variety of genre and formats from a variety of places, time periods and perspectives.

Class discussions, writing assignments, projects, and presentations will invite critical analysis of both the *literary* qualities of these works and the *rhetorical* strategies of the authors, artists and publishers producing literature for this audience. We will also explore other criteria used to evaluate youth literature: reader appeal, developmental appropriateness, pedagogical usefulness, cultural authority, ideology and authenticity. We will consider the ways these works reveal authorial, social or cultural attitudes about teenagers and the world(s) they inhabit, with special attention to those narratives of adolescence that have been challenged by adult gatekeepers (e.g. parents, teachers, librarians) or championed by them.

By the end of this course, you should have a broader understanding of the field of Young Adult Literature and a working knowledge of the resources available to students, scholars and professionals who work with it. You should also do some important thinking about adolescent readers, YA literature, and the contexts in which they meet, and, we hope, read a number of books that you find genuinely interesting and enjoyable.

Students taking this course for graduate credit will complete a more substantial research paper + extra readings

**unless they are post-baccalaureate students seeking teacher certification or non-degree students*

Tentative Schedule of Readings & Assignments

Note: The final exam for this class is scheduled for Tuesday May 1, 10:15 – 12:15 a.m.

Week 1 January 9, 11, 13

- M Introduction + Book Tasting
*Before our next class meeting, introduce yourself—and your chosen book—on WebCT

Note: Assigned WebCT posts are due *before* our class meeting, by **9 AM**

- W Begin reading your self-selected work: identify two passages or pages that exemplify its style

Note: Always bring trade books or the textbook to class for discussions of assigned reading.

Bright Idea: You could mark key passages with a sticky note & write any questions or comments on it.

- F Continue reading; Compose WebCT post (200 word minimum) explaining—using specific examples—how well your book fits the “Characteristics of the Best YA Literature” (handout)

Week 2 January [16], 18, 20

- M No Class Meeting: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

- W ****Meet in the 4th Floor Technology Room in Booth Library** (along east wall)
Peruse *Horn Book* magazine, including reviews of YA; Post (see WebCT for prompt)
In class, we will explore databases used by youth literature scholars & professionals

- F Finish self-selected novel: Bring post + annotated version of professional reviews printed or copied from *NoveList* or the *Children’s Literature Comprehensive Database* (CLCD) with marginal comments (hand written or electronic) near interesting points made by reviewers.

Week 3 January 23, 25, 27 *ALA awards announced Monday 1/23

- M Begin *Monster* (1-46) by Walter Dean Myers (recently named Laureate for youth literature).
Mark two early passages worth discussing, one in the script and one in Steve’s journal.
*Grad Students post on “The Irony of Narration” by Mike Cadden (available Project Muse)

- W Continue *Monster* (47-161); Bring a copy of your WebCT post to share with classmates in class.
(You **could** bring a copy of your post to all discussions, to remember what you said, and add to it.)

- F Finish *Monster*; Read chapters 4 + 5—which describe the state of YA during the 1990s—in *Young Adult Literature: From Romance to Realism* by Michael **Cart** (hereafter “Cart”); In your post, respond to the ending and then articulate an overall evaluation of *Monster* as YA lit., focusing on the features of *Monster* and the evaluative criteria that are most relevant to you.

Week 4 January 30; February 1, 3

- M Begin *A Step from Heaven*; Post for today on the first section *OR* next time on later chapters.

- W Finish *A Step from Heaven*; Read Cart ch. 6, “A New Literature for a New Millennium”

- F ****Meet in Ballenger Teacher Center at Booth Library** (NE corner, main floor) **Bring Library Card!**
Read Cart 7 “Romancing the Retail” to prepare for Book-Tasting: Anthologies & Collections of Poetry & Short Fiction, Non-fiction, Historical Fiction, Fantasy, Sci Fi, and other genre fiction.
In your post, respond to two passages from this chapter that connect to your experience.

****1st WebCT Score (up to 100 points) for posts to this point + reflective post due by Wednesday**

Week 5 February 6, 8, 10

- M Post: write an MLA citation for each book you checked out and answer these questions: How and why did you choose each of these books? What are the covers and paratexts trying to tell you about them? How might each book help you think about issues that interest you? Which aspects of each book would you expect to focus on if you chose to read it? Which one *do* you choose? Why?
- W Post after reading the first third of your book, using genre, *Title of Book*, author + original year of publication as your subject line—for example, Memoir: *Hole in my Life* (Gantos) 2002. Provide analytic description of specific aspects of character, setting, plot, focus or theme, and key features of literary or visual style. Make predictions and/or ask a couple of questions.
- F Read the next hunk of your book. Write a post in which you quote and analyze two key passages, and comment on the appeal or appropriateness of this genre or format of Young Adult literature. Articulate some questions that you might be able to answer by reading reviews of the book, author biography, scholarship focused on genre characteristics etc.

Week 6 February 13, 15, [17]

- M ****Meet in the 4th Floor Technology Room in Booth Library**
Finish your book; In your post, focus on the ending: Was it a satisfying to you as a reader? What does it focus on? What sort of closure does it provide for teen readers?
In class we will search for reviews + journal articles through Project Muse & other databases.
- W Post: Respond to reviews + relevant information from other sources; Outline Book Talk.
- [F] *No Class Meeting: Lincoln's Birthday*

Week 7 February 20, 22, 24

- M Begin 3 minute Book Talks
- W Book Talks
Post on a recent article on young adult literature from an appropriate scholarly journal.
- F Book Talks
Read "Graphic Novels 101" + "Reading Lessons" (handouts) + the beginning of *Daisy Cutter*

Week 8 February 27, 29; March 2

- M Finish *Daisy Cutter*; Post (see WebCT for prompt); Read Cart 12 on visuals in YA
- W Read Cart 11 (on LGBTQ YA) + these stories from the anthology *Am I Blue?*: "Am I Blue?," "Fifty Percent Chance of Lightning," "The Honorary Shepherds," and one more (your choice). Post a comparison of any two. Also take a look at this book's "paratexts." A paratexts is anything used to frame or package a work of literature. In this case, everything except the stories. We'll discuss the purpose or meaning of the text and visuals on front & back covers, the dedication, quotes from reviewers in specific journals, author bios, appendices,...
- F Read "Starbucks Boy" and two more (your choice) from *How They Met* + Cart 10 (on sex)

Week 9 March 5, 7, 9

- M Begin *Does My Head Look Big in This?*; Read Cart 9 (on contemporary realities); **Posts TBA**
- W Continue *Does My Head Look Big in This?*

F Finish *Does My Head Look Big in This?*

****Spring Break****

Week 10 Mar 19, 21, 23

- M ****Meet in Ballenger Teacher Center at Booth Library. Bring your library card!**
Read Cart 1-3 on Young Adult Literary History from the beginning through the 80s;
Post a response to one passage from each chapter. In class, you will have a chance to select works of international and "classic" (pre-1985) YA that you could use for the next project.
- W Read and annotate the review essay "A Second Look at Annie on my Mind" by Roger Sutton.
Post: write an MLA citation for each book you checked out and answer these questions:
How and why did you choose each of these books? What are the covers and paratexts trying to tell you about them? How might each book help you think about issues that interest you? Which aspects of each book would you expect to focus on if you chose to read it? Which one *do* you choose? Why?
- **2nd WebCT Score (up to 150 points) will cover posts to this point + a reflective post, due Monday**
- F Begin self-selected reading of international or "classic" YA; draft a WebCT post after reading the first third, using the *original* place of publication, *Title* (Author), *original* Year of publication as your subject line—for example, US *Annie on my Mind* (Garden) 1982. Describe your first impression and provide analytic description of characters, setting, theme, plot + key features of literary or visual style. Comment on physical features, including paratexts.

Week 11 March 26, 28, 30

- M Read the next hunk. Write a post in which you quote and analyze two or three key passages, at least one in which the dated-ness or foreign-ness of this book is demonstrated.
- W ****Meet in the Ballenger Teacher Center; then the 4th Floor Technology Room in Booth**
Finish your book. In your post, comment on the ending, and the impact of book as a whole. What would you say are the outstanding features of this book? To what extent does it meet your criteria for "good" YA? To what extent (and how) did its foreign-ness or dated-ness matter to you as a reader? Also articulate some questions you might be able to answer by reading reviews, author bio, context information (literary, historical, socio-cultural,...), etc.
- In class, we will explore a larger range of authoritative print and electronic resources, including print reference works like *Something About the Author* and the *Children's Literature Review*, to find relevant information about authors, the critical reception of their work, and the literary and social contexts in which it was published.
- F Annotate research material (at least contemporary reviews & basic biography). In your WebCT post, discuss the significance of specific bits of information and opinion in these materials. How do they help us understand this work or YA? Incorporate at least 3 quoted statements from clearly introduced and properly cited sources, including our textbook.
*Grad Students turn in annotated bibliography of research

**Week 12 April 2, 4, 6 *Bring Draft of Review Essay to conference appointment this week
Review Essay DUE next week, one week after your appointment**

- M Begin Book Reports (4 minutes each)
- W Book Reports
- F Book Reports

Week 13 April 9, 11, 13 *Review Essay DUE this week, one week after your conference

M Begin *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*

W Continue *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*; Read "Darkness Too Visible" (web link); Post today or Friday on assigned section of the novel.

F Finish *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*

Week 14 April 16, 18, 20

M Begin *American Born Chinese*; Post

W Continue *American Born Chinese*; Post today or Friday

F Finish *American Born Chinese*. Begin *Hunger Games*

Week 15 April 23, 25, 27

M Continue *Hunger Games*; Post

W Continue *Hunger Games*
Quest Topic DUE on WebCT

F Finish *Hunger Games*; Post

****3rd WebCT Score (up to 100 points) covers posts to this point**

Finals Week Tuesday May 1, 10:15 – 12:15 a.m.

T Final Quest: In-class Essay

Brief descriptions of major assignments . . .

GRADES

Your course grade will be based on the percentage you earn of the 1000 points available.

Note: I will adjust these point values if we add, cancel, or revise any assignments.

Web-CT Posts (100 + 150 + 100)	= 350 points
Presentations	= 100
Review Essay	= 300
Participation & Attendance*	= 100
Final Quest	= 150

*If you have more than three (3) un-excused absences, you will lose 50 points. If you need to miss class due to illness, a university event or another reason, let me know as soon as possible.

WebCT Posts (up to 350 points total)

Topics for analytic and reflective posts will be announced in class and spelled out more fully on WebCT.

Two or three times—once before mid-term for sure—I will give you a score that reflects my assessment of the productiveness of the effort you put into your posts, as demonstrated by these qualities:

- attention to specific, “quoted” details from literary works or secondary resources you discuss
- exploration and development of your ideas—spelling them out fully and as precisely as you can
- use of terms and concepts introduced in class, our textbook and other secondary readings
- recursiveness = efforts to refine your ideas about YA literature as you accumulate experience, ideas & information about it, and your on-going exploration of *connections* between literary texts
- completeness. **NOTE:** *Late* posts are penalized substantially (typically 3-5 points each) and deductions for *missing* posts (10-15 points each) can have a devastating effect on WebCT scores.

Review Essay (up to 300 points) ~ a formal essay (1000 word *minimum*) in which you provide summary, description, relevant context information (literary, social, cultural, historical), and your own evaluation of a work of Young Adult Literature published early in its development (pre-1980) OR a contemporary work of International YA, either Anglophone (published in an English-speaking country) or translated from another language and then published in the United States. You goal is to explain to a specialized but not scholarly audience (like the readers of *Horn Book* magazine) how informed attention to this particular work can enhance our understanding and appreciation of Young Adult literature in general. Your readers will also be interested in knowing how this work compares to contemporary works of Young Adult literature (like the ones we have been reading), and what this work offers contemporary American teens.

***Graduate Students** will turn in a longer, more research-enriched version of this paper

Presentations (up to 100 points) include a brief “book talk” and a short oral report on self-selected works

Final Quest (up to 150 points) ~ an in-class essay in which you consider three works from the syllabus in relation to a theme, technique or issue of your choice (subject to approval). Open book.

Participation (up to 100 points) starts with attendance and requires your undivided attention to the conversation taking place in *this* room. It includes the contributions you make in class discussion and in group work plus your leadership in the creation of an atmosphere in which people are comfortable saying what they think and, in collaboration with classmates, thinking about what they have just said. You help create this atmosphere by answering and asking questions, and by responding respectfully to other people’s comments. By voicing your own questions and concerns you make it possible for each of us to complicate and clarify our own ideas about Young Adult Literature, which is what we are here for.

The bottom line . . . grades are not curved.

91% & up (910+ points) = **A**; 81 - 90% (810+) = **B**; 71 - 80% (710+) = **C**; 61 - 70% (610+) = **D**; 60% & below = **F**

RESPONSIBILITIES AND POLICIES

- 1.) Keep in touch! Late work will be penalized if we do not come to an understanding *before* the due date. If you are experiencing temporary difficulties, contact me as soon as possible. **No late work or extra credit will be accepted during the last week of classes.**
- 2.) Use MLA or APA style for documentation on your Works Cited page (MLA) or References page (APA) and the in-text citations that refer readers to this list. Use the latest versions of the *MLA Handbook* (7th edition) and the *Publication Manual* (6th ed.) or a reliable print or electronic guide—like the Purdue OWL—with up-to-date information & examples.
- 3.) Plagiarism is the act of taking *someone else's* phrasing, ideas or visuals and presenting them in *your* oral or written work without identifying and giving proper credit to the source. In its impurest form (lying, cheating and/or stealing), plagiarism is a serious academic offense that would result in a zero for the assignment or an "F" for the course, plus university-level penalties and remediation. But any writing you turn in to me that has problematic citations will have to be revised before you can receive a grade for it. Until the documentation is right, there is a zero in the grade book for the assignment.

Worried? Writing Center consultants can help you figure out how to quote, paraphrase, summarize—and cite—all kinds of primary and secondary sources. You can come by at any point in the writing process, from brainstorming, planning & drafting to final editing. Bring your sources and the assignment sheet with you.

Writing Center (Coleman Hall 3110)

Monday – Thursday 9 am – 3 & 6 – 9 pm

Fridays 9 am – 1

Call for an appointment (581-5929) or drop by.

- 4.) Students with documented disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible so we can establish appropriate accommodations.
- 5.) You must complete all major assignments to pass this course.
- 6.) Students seeking Teacher Certification in English Language Arts should provide each of their English dept. professors with the yellow form: "Application for English Department Approval to Student Teach." These are available in a rack outside the office of Dr. Donna Binns (CH 3851). Why don't you just get these to your professors this week?